

I writing to you and all the representatives for Fairfield, CT, my hometown in lieu of coming to Hartford to speak to you in person on Wednesday, March 12. I wish I could make it but have other obligations which I cannot change.

I have tried to understand how we got where we are when it took so long to get here and so many of decisions were made several years ago. I have yet to unravel that mystery. I have come to understand that the driver of all the issues is the new standardized test, the SBAC. Because these tests are a required part of our waiver of the NCLB law which we signed on to, we are required to give these tests. As I discovered very forcibly in a town-wide PTA Council meeting this week, the SBAC tests that the children have been exposed to have been problematic, and the worst casualty have been the children.

In giving the children for these required tests, whether the tests are used to calibrate future tests / are used to measure student or teacher performance, it is vital to the self-esteem and confidence of these students that they are prepared. The only way possible to do this is to continue to implement the Common Core Curriculum. These new tests are meant to evaluate the student's knowledge of this new material. We can't go back to teaching the old material, the new tests won't cover that material. And we can't go back to the old material, the new tests won't evalate student knowledge of that material...and again, we are required to use the SBAC due to our agreement to the NCLB waiver. It's a bit circular but eventutally we end up where we are.

So we are where we are. We're just here too slowly and too quickly at the same time. It has been 30 years since the last major re-write of Connecticut's curriculum.. We are well overdue in examining what and how we teach our children and how we evalute how well we've taught them. We have rushed into this major and much overdue educational reform and thus are running into implementation problems. We have backed ourselves into a corner. Our current student population will pay a price for this and for that we should be ashamed. But I do believe this change is vital improvement to our educational system. How we get through implementing it could have been much, much better but I blame that on political wrangling and less on the educational professionals.

One other issue that is a problem is the way the teacher evaluation system is tied to the SBAC results. Even if the tests are used only to see how well the test works and is not used for either a teacher or student performance indicator, whenever these test results are published the public will use them as performance indicators. Having the teacher evaluation program codified into legislation versus written as guidelines makes this new system, which is already very difficult to implement, so much harder. I hope there is some way of reworking the wording so that there is more ability to appreciate the need for the type of fluid change that an implementation of this magnitude requires.

I am very grateful you are reviewing these items and I hope the state will continue to provide the long-needed support to our local school districts to get this important improvement in our educational system working. I don't think it's a perfect solution but I do believe it is a positive direction. I hope Connecticut can work together for the sake of our children to make this implementation go as smoothly as possible.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mary Hogue
165 Stonewall Lane
Fairfield, CT 06824

maryhogue@optonline.net
203.256.9802